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"THE MYTH OF THE MELTING-POT"

A SERMON

BY

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"THE MYTH OF THE MELTING-POT,"

Being the third in a series of four sermons on

**"GOD'S REVELATION OF FACT IN
HUMAN HISTORY"**

- I "The Dread Responsibility of Ascent."
- II "The Saving Remnant."
- III "The Myth of the Melting-Pot."
- IV "The Nemesis of Forgetting How to Be Soldiers and How to Honor Them."

“THE MYTH OF THE MELTING-POT”

WE are considering today the habits of God in His handiwork. Without knowing just what life is, we are always impressed at this time in the year with the amazing amount of it.

Life has been putting on her flower show, and her fruit, bird, cattle, and horse shows now for several million years and her method is fairly well known. Her method is everywhere the same with all kinds of life. After each annual exhibition she writes up the minutes and compresses the whole exhibition, with the brief written record, into a little traveling kit and goes into winter quarters. This little kit we call a seed or a cell, and, in mechanical compression of great possibilities in small space, it is the world's great marvel. The next year she takes this little closely folded up exhibition out of her vest pocket and gives the whole show over again.

Life in the tiniest seed keeps all that ever has been done and can bring it out again. The flowers she put on that summer when the children of Israel left Egypt, or the summer Caesar's legions went north—perhaps they were a little larger and redder that summer—she has them all in the minutes and remembers how to do it. Anything she has done once she can do again. We have a way now of coaxing out just what we want from these bits of compressed experience of ages in seed and cell. Mr. Burbank's method is just making two of these little

closely folded up exhibits put their shows together to make a new exhibition, and they will do that. If there is anything we do not want done again we just destroy the seed or the cell, or make it combine with something else and yield something different.

We are a part of this same system. All that can be done with seeds and cells to make them bring out their best experience in being flowers, and fruits, and bees, and cattle, and horses and fowls, it all applies equally to us. Of all kinds of life man now is the director and it is wholly right to make seeds and cells bring out the best they have in them and to exterminate where this will serve.

While all this knowledge applies equally to man, man has no one over him to apply it to himself. Man is a director but he himself is not directed. There is no one to rule the ruler; no one to guard the guard. Man's code, his morals, his sympathies, his religion, his fear and awe of the individual, all combine to keep him from applying these same methods of improving his own kind. That is, there is no human culture in the sense that there is flower culture and bee, and fruit, and horse culture. The way to do it is just the same for human culture, and it is known, but, man has no one over him to apply this knowledge to himself.

For example, Mr. Burbank combines and coaxes out what he wants, then, he piles up all that he does not want and burns it so that what he does not want will not mix with and corrupt what he does

want. Man cannot do this with himself. Plagues and wars have exterminated many, but, it was not a directed process of extermination to improve the human kind as Mr. Burbank's is to improve wheat or roses. In human life often those were destroyed who are comparable to what Mr. Burbank would keep, and those were kept who are comparable to what he destroyed. Man burned the wrong pile.

That is, with all other parts of nature, except ourselves, we say nature can be improved. We can help her draw out and make combinations which she would never make in a million years by herself. Nature never made, and never would have made, some of our finest kind of life which we have made by directing her with our human knowledge. The fibre of the wood; the little strands of cotton and fleece; the texture of the flesh; the quality of the milk; the strength, fleetness, and intelligence of the animal; the size of the fruit; the reduction of rind, shell, bark, thorn and seed; the size, color, and fragrance of the flower, all these have been changed from what nature herself ever did unaided. All this knowledge of helping nature, and outdoing nature, is unapplied in case of man. In making men the ancient myth rules in our politics, our religion, our schools and our customs. The ancient myth is that nature undirected, in man's case; that man just going with his hit or miss instincts will produce the finest possible race of men. In all other fields we call it ancient myth. In human affairs we call it the directing hand of Providence.

If we were going to chart the curve of life for roses, or fruits, or horses, we should find a rapidly upward tending curve of advance since man took a hand in applying his knowledge to them. There is an element of chance as to which particular horse will win, but, there is no element of chance about the strain that will win. So of dogs and cattle and many kinds of life, the winning strains are known and prizes almost never go outside of these strains. Here, man has applied his knowledge to bring out and establish excellence. He has been doing this so long now with horses that he has made a kind that year after year runs true to form. For a century and a half now they have been the fastest and they never run with other strains at all without giving the inferior strain a handicap. There are no such established winning strains of men, made by human direction, as there are of bees, roses, dogs, horses and fowls, for man has had no one over him to apply this knowledge to himself.

Without knowing just why they did it, we find, through human history, codes which did regulate this matter of bringing people together and keeping them apart. We call them superstitions now, but, perhaps they did for men often what our knowledge now says is just the thing to do. They may have served to keep the human strains apart which it is best for the human stock to be kept apart. They had systems of caste and class; they had an ingrained dislike for strangers and foreigners, people not of their breed. They understood the divine law

to say that while He has made of one blood all nations He has set bounds to their habitation. They had laws and customs to keep their people in, and other people out. They had marriage laws which were to them the laws of God which made it a sin of the first order to marry outside of their stock. This was strong with the Hebrews. Many passages in the Old Testament deal with this matter of taking wives from other peoples. The book of Ruth is a little piece of Hebrew fiction to popularize the then heresy of marrying a foreign woman. Ezra after the captivity thinks this the greatest evil and he had a public ceremony to avert the heavy hand of God upon them, at which time all who had married foreign wives put them away. No doubt all these things served a good purpose and they were perhaps wiser than they knew. It produced and kept a good race stock. Egypt had a law that no Africans forever should pass down the Nile into Egypt to mingle with the Egyptian population.

What briefly is the history of the human race until now? When we go out to travel today, what do we go out to see? Whether we go down to Mexico, or to Central America, or to Arizona, or to Southern Europe or to Western Asia, or to Northern Africa, we go out to see a miserable people moving about among the monuments of ancient grandeur. Sight-seeing in most of the world is looking at the remains of a great civilization while being imperturbed by a race of beggars who live among the ruins. The visible remains bear evidence that once there

were giants there. Great buildings, noble art, great writings, remains of engineering on a large scale, all testify that these places were once the abode of a great race of men. They are not there now and history is just the attempt to say what became of them.

A number of reasons have been given and each may have contributed. There is one factor that seems to be rather constant. With all other contributing causes, this one seems to have been present always.

From out of the past came a strong people. They were somewhat isolated. The mountains, or the protecting sea, or the deserts, kept them in and kept other people out. Their religion, their customs, their contempt for foreigners, all made for isolation, inclusion and exclusion. Egypt is one of the oldest and most outstanding examples. The remains indicate the presence there once of a great breed of men. There is evidence of high intelligence, general material prosperity and outstanding intellectual accomplishments. Some of the greatest discoveries of the human mind were made there. This breed of men went on for a long time, the longest known record of a high state of human life.

Then, something happened. They were too near, no doubt, to see just what did happen, but, looking back, we can see. Whether they let down their walls of exclusion, or whether outside people broke them down, other people poured in and often their own

people poured out. Other people came in to mix with them and their people went out to mix with other people. The great stock of men became in a short time lost in a great middle class which holds its own for a time. Its works are not as great, and its government is not as good, as that of the stock that is displaced, but, it is fairly good and goes on for a few centuries. The mixing goes on until this middle class group is itself displaced by a mongrel population. Amid the great monuments, surrounded with the present population, we ask, "How could these have produced such great works?" They did not. Those who produced them have gone. The great first stock and the middle class went out completely and left the ground to them. There they have remained for centuries. Competent historians tell us that there is no record of a mongrel population having reached any kind of prosperity for themselves or having added anything to the world. The constant element in the decline of great states has been this mixing process which gradually reduces a great human stock. Every one has had its melting-pot and the melting-pot burned out the gold completely and left the slag and the dross. This has happened now so often that we can get some law of the human drift. It has happened in parts of the world that fortunately have left us fairly complete records.

In each of these cases of passing from a productive race to a mongrel race, there was in each country a state of mind which went with the decline. This

was the popular philosophy of the time. We have no doubt that in each country the processes which hastened the exit of the great stock, and the establishment of the mongrel stock, were the popular things in politics and in religion. We have no doubt that it was called the progressive, the humane and the liberal thought of the time.

We have gleaned out a few of the elements that went along with this decline as the popular political belief of the people. In all has been a growing dislike of the great stock which resulted in their banishment or their being killed outright. With this was a lowering of the popular mind to be against any kind of excellence, which resulted in the great political leaders being unable to guide or to lead the great mass of the population. The fickle popular will was manipulated by demagogues who rose to power by the popular appeal of protecting the weak against the strong. The prudent and the thrifty were penalized by legislation and taxation. Person and property had no safeguards and hence became valueless. The government was reduced to a kind that could go up and down with the fluctuating crowd which was stirred now by one popular leader, then another. The hardiness, the courage, the civic pride and the patriotism, which made and defended the state, gave way to parasitism which fed upon the country. The old sense of duty to the state was replaced by a sentiment which judged the government by what it gave in doles from the public fund. We are just gathering up here from Egyptian, Greek

and Roman history some elements of the popular political belief which in all have gone on with this process of eliminating, first the great creative stock, which made the noble monuments, and then the elimination of the middle class which left the mongrel stock alone in control.

We are not yet fully informed about all the laws of God, but, revelation is not sealed and there has come some revelation since Sinai and the Isle of Patmos. We know the will of God largely by what he permits, and there is some recent revelation that is rather pointed about the law of God on this matter of mixing and making life, man's life or any kind of life.

A quiet churchman, not many years ago, had a hobby which he pursued when his church duties permitted. He had a garden; he raised peas. He took long kinds and short kinds; he took all kinds. In this little seed is a great history of good traits in peas and bad traits in peas. He put them together and noted the result. He counted what happened when good peas were made to combine with bad peas. He counted the bad and the good, then he planted both bad and good and counted the results again. He found that certain good traits are stronger in some and that they are persistent. If these are used exclusively the product will be good with certain regularity and in certain proportion. And then he found that he got a poor strain, short in stock and wrinkled seed, and that if these were

used he would get nothing else but this kind. That is, he found the revelation of God about mixing peas, how to bring out of these little seeds the best in their long experience in being peas, and how to bring out the worst in their long experience in being peas. This is known as Mendel's Law. It is not very well known. We do not expect it to be popularly known or acted upon. When after fifty years of knowledge of human origin the only form of it that has reached the popular mind is a caricature of it, that man comes from the monkey, we do not expect Mendel's Law to be popularly known. It is a very complex thing. It is not fully worked out, but the will of God in mingling kinds seems to be that the result of mingling can be something better or something worse, and that either that better or that worse can be established as a constant strain.

This little cell of human life is an epitome of the race. Any kind of life that man has ever lived is gathered up in it and can be brought out again. When man was a cannibal, a savage, half-civilized, every stage, the best of him and the worst of him, all is gathered up in the little human cell. We have discovered that mingling some kinds of life results in bringing out the good traits of both and that they go on getting better. The bad traits are not brought out. We say the bad traits become latent, that is, they are there, as is evidenced by the black sheep in the flock and the black bean in the pod, but they do not come out often in the stock.

Life has another habit which is not so pleasant. While mixing some kinds of life gives a result better than either, mixing other kinds of life gives something worse than both. Mixing some kinds of life seems to set free, and bring out, these old, inactive, latent, bad qualities which had not come out perhaps for generations. Mixing some kinds of life gives a preponderance of bad qualities. Mongrel and hybrids, which are made by mixing the wrong kinds of life, are often wilder, have worse dispositions and are not as intelligent as the parents. Nature says that it is a bad combination. They just pooled their bad qualities. This is true of mongrel peoples. The bad disposition of the half-caste is proverbial. A highly civilized, and a long civilized kind of life, mixes with a fine Indian strain with a result that is neither good Indian nor good white man. He has not the good qualities of either. So of the Spaniard mixed with other strains over the whole continent south of us. The half-caste Portuguese is more cruel than the Portuguese himself. Travelers have a saying that God made white men but the devil made half-castes. Mingling some kinds of life makes advance. Mingling other kinds throws life back to old ways; sets free the worst qualities. It makes life revert.

Every great center of civilization has had its melting-pot and the melting-pot usually, in time, moved among the ruins of better things. It is a popular political philosophy; has always been. Whatever we do, we like to be told that it will give

the best possible results. Popular political philosophies have often been national and race suicide, but they are pleasant to hear. The truth of the melting-pot is that fresh people, from around the border, have come in and have helped to build a better stock of men. Some of the strains of Europe which have combined in a new way here have given good results. A part of our immigration brought a number of seemingly different kinds, often really the same kind, the same race stock, which have lost some old types in new, and we hope better. This gives a jaunty optimism, but it does not follow that all strains of men can thus be mingled with profit to themselves, or the country or the race.

That every kind of human life can come from all parts of the world to any country and that out of the mingling will come, surely and inevitably, a better race of men, is not anything that anyone knows. That some kinds of people can come from some parts of the world and out of the mixture will come good people, and may be better people, we are justified in believing.

There is no fresh stock now to come in from around the border to recruit a decaying stock if it should now decay. We have to get the better race of men now out of ourselves. Now we have to join together where joining will send us on, and not join where it will send us back.

What we do as a country in the way of admission or exclusion might be politically popular, and economically beneficial; might be called humane, tender, and religious, and still be entirely false to fact and

human advance. The laws of God in things and in people do not care in the least for our political philosophies or our human sentiments in this matter. The human stock often has decayed with the best of sentiments upon its lips.

Can we ever apply this knowledge to ourselves? There is no one over us to apply it. Is human life too big to direct? Must it always go just hit or miss, and blindly? After we know how the laws of God in people have worked out, and always do work out, can we make ourselves go the more profitable way? We have done it with other kinds of life that operate under the same law.

One rose getting better does not help the other roses. The wild ones, the common ones, the short ones, the trailers, and the climbers get no benefit. They have no way of making the gain of one go to all. Man has. With man, all that any kind anywhere does, goes out in benefit in time to all men everywhere. Better strains of men enrich the whole race, for we have a way of communicating good. When men decline anywhere life for men everywhere is impoverished. The lot of the poorest and most helpless of men is only made worse by having more of their own kind, and made unbearable and impossible by having all of their own kind. The lot of the worst of men is helped by having more of the best of men. Whatever makes more of the best of men is the law of God, and that ought to be our political creed; that ought to be our national policy; that ought to be our religion. That is the will of the world revealed.

